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Page: 330

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PTQ2799

PAGE 01 CARACA 01432 111909Z

ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	ACQ-01	CIAE-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	L-01
	ADS-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00
	PRS-00	P-00	CIO-00	SP-00	SSO-00	TRSE-00	T-00
	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-04	G-00	SAS-00	/019W

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0605

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001432

ARA FOR A/S DAVIDOW FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/10/03

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, VE

SUBJECT: YOUR MEETING WITH RADAMES MUNOZ LEON ON TUESDAY, MAY 12,
AT 10:30 A.M.

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR JOHN F. MAISTO. REASON: 1.5 (B)

1. (U) FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER AND CURRENT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE
RADAMES MUNOZ LEON WILL MEET WITH YOU TUESDAY, MAY 12, AT 10:30
A.M.

2. (U) ADMIRAL MUNOZ WAS THE FIRST FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER TO
DECLARE HIS CANDIDACY SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. SINCE THEN, GENERAL
FERNANDO OCHOA ANTICH, ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO RUN IN THE
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PAGE 02 CARACA 01432 111909Z

DECEMBER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS.

3. (C) MUNOZ'S CANDIDACY WAS THE CREATION OF A SMALL GROUP OF
YOUNG POLITICIANS, SOME INDEPENDENT AND SOME WITH TIES TO THE
DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY (AD). PROMINENT AMONG THIS GROUP IS JOSE
DAVILA, A FORMER DEPUTY AND CURRENTLY SENIOR STAFFER ON THE SENATE
DEFENSE COMMITTEE, WHO IS CLOSELY TIED TO AD SENATOR LEWIS PEREZ.

4. (C) MUNOZ'S CANDIDACY HAS A SINGLE PURPOSE: ATTACK HUGO
CHAVEZ. MUNOZ WAS CHOSEN FOR THIS JOB BECAUSE OF HIS MUCH

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CLASSIFIED BY DEPT. OF STATE, L. HEDGBETH,

n/a

DAS, A/ISS

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REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON

CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)

DECLASSIFY AFTER: 10 MAY 2023

DATE/CASE ID: 15 JUL 2009 200503654

UNCLASSIFIED

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

Page: 331

n/a

PUBLICIZED CONFRONTATION WITH PABLO MEDINA AND THE RADICAL CAUSE PARTY (LCR) FOLLOWING THE 1992 COUPS. YOU WILL RECALL THAT MUNOZ ACCUSED MEDINA AND THE LCR OF SELLING WEAPONS FROM FUERTE TIUNA AND CACHING THEM IN THE BARRIOS FOR USE DURING A FUTURE INSURRECTION. THE ACCUSATIONS ENRAGED MEDINA AND PROVOKED HIM TO PHYSICALLY ASSAULT MUNOZ IN THE CONGRESS, AN ASSAULT WHICH HURT THE LCR IN THE 1993 ELECTIONS AND BRIEFLY WON FAME FOR MUNOZ AS A DEFENDER OF PUBLIC ORDER AND THE INSTITUTIONAL VALUES OF THE ARMED FORCES.

5. (C) MUNOZ'S CAMPAIGN HAS ATTRACTED LITTLE POPULAR SUPPORT. HE IS STILL STUCK IN THE "OTHERS" CATEGORY IN POLLING RESULTS. HOWEVER, HE HAS BEEN PROMINENTLY FEATURED IN NEWSPAPERS AND TV TALK SHOWS, WHERE HIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN:

-- CHAVEZ IS A COUPSTER AND ANTI-DEMOCRAT WHO SEEKS TO ACCOMPLISH THROUGH THE BALLOT BOX WHAT HE FAILED TO ACHIEVE IN 1992;

-- CHAVEZ AND HIS SUPPORTERS (SUCH AS PABLO MEDINA OF THE PPT AND MORE RADICAL GROUPS, LIKE BANDERA ROJA) HAVE CACHED WEAPONS WHICH THEY WILL USE SHOULD CHAVEZ LOSE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION;

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PAGE 03 CARACA 01432 111909Z

-- CHAVEZ IS RECEIVING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM CUBA AND COLOMBIAN GUERRILLA GROUPS SUCH AS THE FARC AND THE ELN (THESE RUMORS HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING FOR SOME TIME, BUT HAVE NOT BEEN VERIFIED);

-- CHAVEZ'S INABILITY TO GET A VISA TO TRAVEL TO THE U.S. IS EVIDENCE THAT HE IS UNACCEPTABLE TO VENEZUELA'S MAJOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PARTNERS, AND THEREFORE NOT WORTHY OF THE PRESIDENCY.

6. (C) IT IS DIFFICULT AT THIS POINT TO DETERMINE IF MUNOZ'S ATTACKS ON CHAVEZ HAVE ANY RESONANCE WITH VOTERS. HIS MESSAGE IS AIMED LARGELY AT THE ARMED FORCES (ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY DON'T VOTE, BUT THEIR FAMILIES DO) AND CONSERVATIVES. CHAVEZ'S NUMBERS CONTINUE TO INCREASE, ALTHOUGH DURING THE LAST TWO WEEKS HIS ASCENT HAS SLOWED, BUMPING BETWEEN 22 AND 23 PERCENT. MUNOZ IS ONE OF THE ONLY CANDIDATES OUT THERE AT THE MOMENT TAKING DIRECT SHOTS AT CHAVEZ, [REDACTED]

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8. (C) YOU CAN EXPECT MUNOZ TO USE HIS MEETING WITH YOU TO DRUM UP PUBLICITY FOR HIMSELF HERE. HE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY CONTRAST HIS

n/a

CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

Page: 332

n/a

ABILITY TO SEE YOU WITH CHAVEZ'S INABILITY TO EVEN GET TO THE U.S. THIS IS INEVITABLE AND NOT NECESSARILY BAD, SINCE IT WILL HIGHLIGHT CHAVEZ'S VISA INELIGIBILITY UNDER U.S. LAW. WE WILL PREPARE SOME PRESS GUIDANCE FOR USE HERE, WHICH WE WILL SEND TO YOU SEPTTEL.

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10. (C) WHAT MUNOZ WILL NOT TALK ABOUT, AND IN THIS HE IS NOT ALONE, IS THAT CHAVEZ' GROWING POPULARITY IS NOT LINKED TO ANY OF THESE GEOPOLITICAL FACTORS, BUT INSTEAD IS THE PRODUCT OF CHAVEZ'S ABILITY TO PLAY TO THE DISGUST WITH WHICH MANY VENEZUELAN VIEWS TRADITIONAL POLITICS AND THEIR UNDERLYING DESIRE FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE.

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Pag»

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